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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an alternative methodology used to study students' constructions of meaning as they engage in a curriculum-making project while taking "Global Perspectives," a foundational graduate preservice teacher education course at Pace University, New York. Global Perspectives offers opportunities to explore the power of suppositions and biases and to integrate world concerns and awareness of stereotyping into curriculum planning. The alternative methodology extends the collective reflection of interpersonal discourse through interpretation of multicultural calendar artifacts as texts. Viewing these artifacts created by students as texts and reviewing the statements made by the calendars' creators on videotape allows the two instructors to explore the focal and tacit dimensions of the students' expressed personal knowledge. Students' viewing of their representations and the artifacts made by their classmates as texts means that they can access how someone else thinks. This approach helps develop the global perspectives of preservice teachers. The calendar task makes future teachers' actions and reflections real in regard to the multicultural curriculum by requiring students to think about taken-for-granted notions of cultural and personal markings of time. (Contains 1 figure and 18 references.) (SLD)

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Collective Reflection as an Alternative Methodology in Curriculum Research and Teaching: Representations in Global Perspectives

Kathryn De Lawter & Adrienne Andi Sosin

Our purpose is to invite reflective and constructive criticism of our alternative methodology in curriculum research and teaching, and our formulation of a shared conception of representation in teacher education. We negotiate meanings of representations in a process we call collective reflection, a pedagogical and research methodology we named in our self-study. We are looking at the representations created by students and the representations we have formed through our research. Our qualitative, multi-layered research study centers on students' constructions of meaning as they engage in a curriculum-making project while taking "Global Perspectives," a foundational graduate pre-service teacher education course at Pace University in New York City.

Global Perspectives offers opportunities to explore the power of presuppositions and biases, and to integrate world concerns and awareness of stereotyping into curriculum planning. Readings, activities and dialogical interactions address the issues of culture, power and curriculum integral to the goals of teacher preparation. Students get in touch with ideas and beliefs about how to approach diverse students and curriculum, address world concerns in their subject matters, and become confident that they can contribute to a school community. Global Perspectives calls for developing trusting relationships where students feel free to think imaginatively about realities and possibilities. The course provides for attention to meaning and students' expressions and examinations of personal knowledge. A project in which students construct a "multicultural calendar" artifact to be used in their future classrooms offers an expressive and powerful vehicle for creating representations that embody beliefs about multicultural curriculum and teaching.

Our alternative methodology extends the collective reflection of interpersonal discourse

through interpretation of the multicultural calendar artifacts as texts. This extension is founded on the philosophical underpinnings articulated by Ricoeur (1976). Thus, our collective reflection with each other initiates a research process that organizes both the representations made by our students and the representations from our interactions in conducting research.

Collective reflection is an iterative process, drawing upon prior representations for interpreting the original in new ways. Our understanding of representation has become a critical part of our study. Generative themes (Friere, 1970/1998) categorize emergent themes, which identify specific aspects of the representations. As demonstrative of our generative and emergent themes, in this session we will display and discuss the representations in two calendar artifacts: Julie's Calendar and Richard's Calendar. Both of these provide a sample of collective reflection in engaging with the artifacts as texts, and are a window on our praxis in teaching.

Our interpretative work has led to understandings and questions about the meanings that the students bring with them about time, culture and education. Viewing the multicultural calendars as artifacts and texts, and reviewing the statements made by the calendar's creators on videotape, we two instructors explore the focal and tacit dimensions of our students' expressed personal knowledge. We find that the calendar artifact informs us about the student's critical perspective.

We now define representation as the: 1) symbolic, tangible manifestations of meanings students formulate in response to course assignments, and 2) forms that result from researchers' decisions and the choice of methodologies. In many calendars, time and culture are represented in ways that demonstrate a continuum of the taken for granted to the critically understood. We have found evidence of other emergent themes, such as labeling as naming, original artifact creation, historical perspective, and the integration of world concerns as an indicator of the purposefulness of curriculum making. These and other emergent themes become the basis for seeking further evidence

in the calendars themselves of the students' approaches to critical thinking, critical theory and their personal constructions of meaning.

The calendar artifacts and other data sources identified are representations of meaning. We view representation as data sources that are evidence of students' and the teacher/researchers' meanings. The representations that appear in the calendar are indicative of both instructors and the student's interpretations of curriculum. They suggest how students approach learning, and respond to challenges, in particular, the challenge posed by the complex and ambiguous multicultural calendar assignment. Students' and teacher/researcher representations are emblematic of personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1964, 1967). The significance of personal knowledge is that it is recognizable in the form of qualities and values that students invest in the process of creating their artifacts and that educators invest in teaching and research. Our view is that representations are externalizations of meaning. These meaning constructions reveal how humans shape and are shaped by the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Our approach toward the calendar artifacts as inter- and intra-personally constructed objects leads to the interpretation of artifacts as texts (Ricoeur, 1976). As teacher educators, we have the responsibility and opportunities to be leader/participants in action, response, recognition, questioning, recording, and reflection, all of which constitutes "interpretive work" (Garfinkel, 1967). We extend students' interpretive work by asking them to create and relate to artifacts that are representations of their meanings. The assignment encourages imaginative thought, fosters risk-taking, invites creativity, nourishes mutuality, and cultivates questioning of taken-for-granted (Schutz, 1962) ways of viewing the world. Students' representations are revealing. What may be seen through interpreting calendars as texts are students' taken-for-granted views of time, culture, knowledge, and values.

Our constructivist research methodology interprets student artifacts as texts and affirms

articulation of meanings dialogically in collective reflection. We combine and adapt qualitative methodologies (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1998; Noffke, 1997; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Stake, 1988; Wolcott, 1988; Yin, 1984) in multiple action research cycles. Data sources include the original calendar artifacts and their accompanying materials. Our data is triangulated through participant observation, conversations, use of holistic rating criteria, and analytic reviews of video and audio tape, with reflection upon the characteristics of physical artifacts and documents (Turner, 1974).

The schoolwork that we ask students to do is the way they come to know us, and how we come to know them. In the interpretive and interactive assignments we shape, create, and design, we encourage pre-service teachers to express their meanings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and to be imaginative in their forms of representation. Students' viewing of their representations and the artifacts made by their classmates as texts, means that they can access how someone else thinks - both the limitations and the insights. This is a different condition than often happens in classrooms, where assignments belong to the teacher and the students say to the teacher, "Tell me what you want." Students that give the teacher what they think the teacher wants are removed from the challenge and purposeful work of doing what is meaningful to them. The pre-service teachers' consciousness of stereotypes and world concerns is expressed but too often taken for granted in everyday pedagogical and curricular decisions. Developing awareness of global perspectives by pre-service teachers is therefore of great importance to teacher education. (Evans, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Interpreting representations and calendar artifacts as texts in a collective reflection process is meaningful in that it develops pre-service teachers' global perspectives. The calendar task makes future teachers' actions and reflections in regard to multicultural curriculum real by requiring students to think about taken-for-granted notions of cultural and personal markings of time. Students are

challenged to envision themselves teaching. Acts of collective reflection transform social relations between pre-service teachers and teacher educators so that conceptions of time, culture, and curriculum are more likely to be critically perceived. Collective reflection makes space for participatory and democratic uses of language and actions in a classroom setting. We model collective reflection with our students, in the expectation that they will view teaching as praxis. Through the process of developing collective reflection about educational presuppositions, stereotypical biases, and human need on a global scale, pre-service teachers value insights, gain perspective, and envision themselves in multicultural classrooms of the 21st Century.

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Collective Reflection

Collective reflection is the negotiation of meaning in a process that makes focal otherwise taken-for-granted assumptions for the purpose of recognizing and valuing differences. This process reveals how people view their relationships, use language, and interpret and envision their roles in multicultural classrooms.

What representations are displayed in the artifacts themselves?

- Examples of Representations from Richard's Calendars and Julie's Calendar

Richard's Two Calendars

This calendar is intended to explain where the year, day, and seasons come from. I added the holidays in an attempt to bring in a multicultural element. But is this really all there is to a calendar? So I created another calendar, to be paired with this one. It's a silly calendar. I call it Richard's Calendar, and I want to suggest to my students that instead of using Gregory's calendar we use my calendar to measure time in the classroom.

Richard Gatjens

Julie's 52 Card Calendar Format: An Explanation

This deck of cards is a multicultural calendar. The symbols on the deck reflect just a few of the groups of people that I see around me in New York City. The artwork I selected was created by people who worked in their own countries and made it a point of their work to capture and broadcast elements of their own cultures. I have chosen human figures to represent the four suits in the deck because physical appearance is one way people associate themselves with their cultures. These artworks come from different periods of time and yet contain elements that are still found in each culture today.

Julie Mabey

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What representations are elicited by our pedagogical methodologies?

Connecting the sample artifacts to the holistic criteria and characteristics of the project

Which representational forms support making connections and identifying particular themes?

Generative and Emergent Themes – Card sets categorize themes that have become evident thus far in this research

How do the representations in the calendar artifacts inform the layers of the research?

What generative and emerging themes are evident in these multicultural calendar artifacts?

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